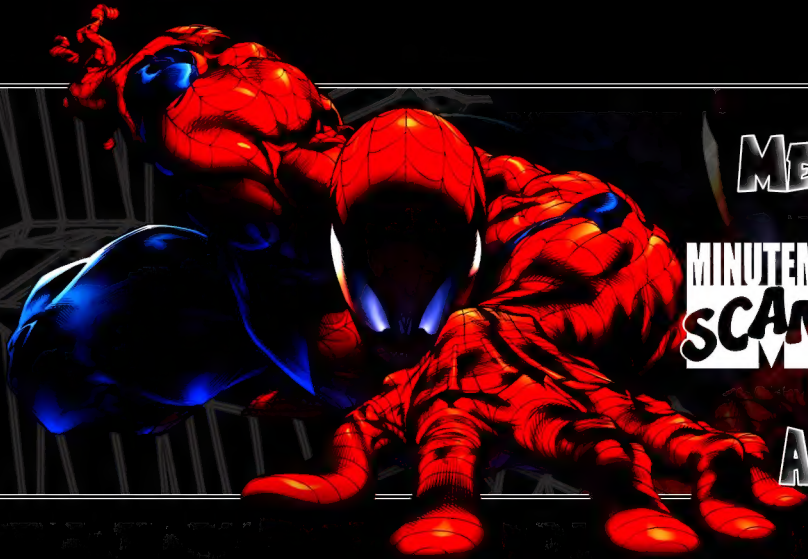




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AMANDA SEFTON ONCE LIVED THE UNUSUAL LIFE OF A POWERFUL SORCERESS AND ALLY TO THE UNCANNY X-MEN. BUT NOW, AFTER THE EVENTS OF BLACK SUN, SHE FINDS HERSELF ARMED WITH A MAGICAL SOULSWORD AND STEPPING DISKS, CARRYING ON THE LEGACY OF MAGIK, GUARDIAN OF LIMBO! STAN LEE PRESENTS:

MAGIK IN

A GATHERING OF FOES

DAN ABNETT & ANDY LANNING STORY

LIAM MCCORMACK-SHARP ART

SHARPEFONT & PT LETTERS

KEVIN SOMERS COLORS

MIKE RAICHT ASST. EDITOR

MIKE MARTS EDITOR

JOE QUESADA CHIEF



DORMAMMU...
YOU ARE THE LAST
CREATURE I WOULD
EXPECT TO FIND
KNOCKING AT THE
GATES OF
LIMBO.

WHAT
BUSINESS
HAVE YOU
IN MY
REALM?

BELIEVE
ME, DEAR MAGIK, I
WOULD NOT HAVE COME
HERE WILLINGLY WERE
IT NOT A MATTER OF
THE MOST VITAL
URGENCY.

I BRING
WITH ME A TALE
I AM SURE
YOU WILL WANT
TO HEAR...

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...ONE THAT
IS BEST TOLD BY
A WITNESS.

SPEAK, WRETCH!
IDENTIFY YOURSELF
TO THE MISTRESS OF
LIMBO AND TELL HER
WHAT YOU SAW!

I...I AM
CALLED GLEEG,
MISTRESS...

"...A CAPTAIN
IN THE
SYLURIAN
GUARD WHO
WATCHES
OVER THE
GATES OF
LORD
NIGHTMARE'S
FORTRESS.

"DARKNESS HAD FALLEN, AND MY
WARRIORS WERE JUST SETTLING
IN FOR THE NIGHT-WATCH...

"...WHEN ONE AMONGST US
SPIED SOMETHING IN THE
SKY AND CRIED OUT.

"IT WAS A STORM, MISTRESS. AN UNNATURAL TEMPEST THAT SPLINTERED THE NIGHT AND SENT BROKEN SHARDS OF ITS BLACKNESS FLUTTERING DOWN UPON US.

"THE SPLINTERS WERE LIKE BLADES, MISTRESS, BUT ALSO ALIVE. THEY RIPPED MY GUARDS TO PIECES.

"THERE WAS NOTHING WE COULD DO TO FIGHT THEM...NOTHING!"



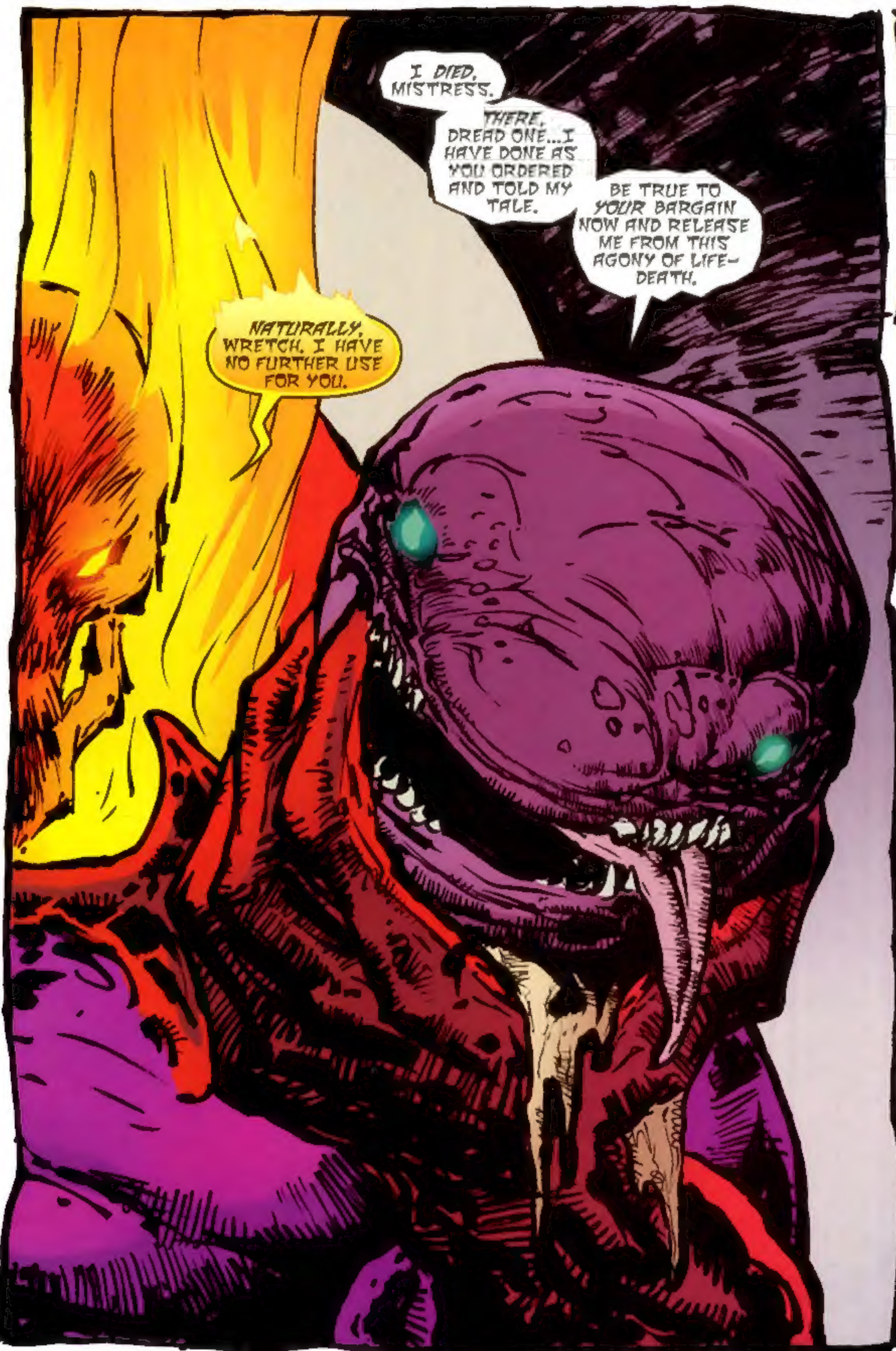


IN JUST
A MATTER OF
MINUTES...LORD
NIGHTMARE'S
FORTRESS WAS
OVERRUN.

MEIN
GOTT! ISN'T
NIGHTMARE--

...ONE OF THE
MOST POWERFUL
BEINGS IN ALL
THE SPLINTER
REALMS? YES,
KURT.

GO ON,
GUARD-CAPTAIN...
WHAT HAPPENED
THEN?



I DIED,
MISTRESS.

THERE,
DREAD ONE...I
HAVE DONE AS
YOU ORDERED
AND TOLD MY
TALE.

BE TRUE TO
YOUR BARGAIN
NOW AND RELEASE
ME FROM THIS
AGONY OF LIFE-
DEATH.

NATURALLY,
WRETCH. I HAVE
NO FURTHER USE
FOR YOU.



I KEPT IT
ANIMATED LONG
ENOUGH FOR YOU
TO HEAR ITS
TALE, MAGIK.

SOME
POTENT FORCE,
CAPABLE OF OVER-
WHELMING EVEN A
MAGICAL LORD
LIKE NIGHTMARE,
THREATENS
THE SPLINTER
REALMS.

FROM
THE LOOK OF THE
BATTLE YOUR WALLS
HAVE JUST WITHSTOOD,
I IMAGINE YOU HAVE
CONCLUDED THE
SAME.

I BELIEVE
THAT UNLESS WE
BEGIN TO WORK
TOGETHER, WE
WILL ALL BE
DESTROYED.



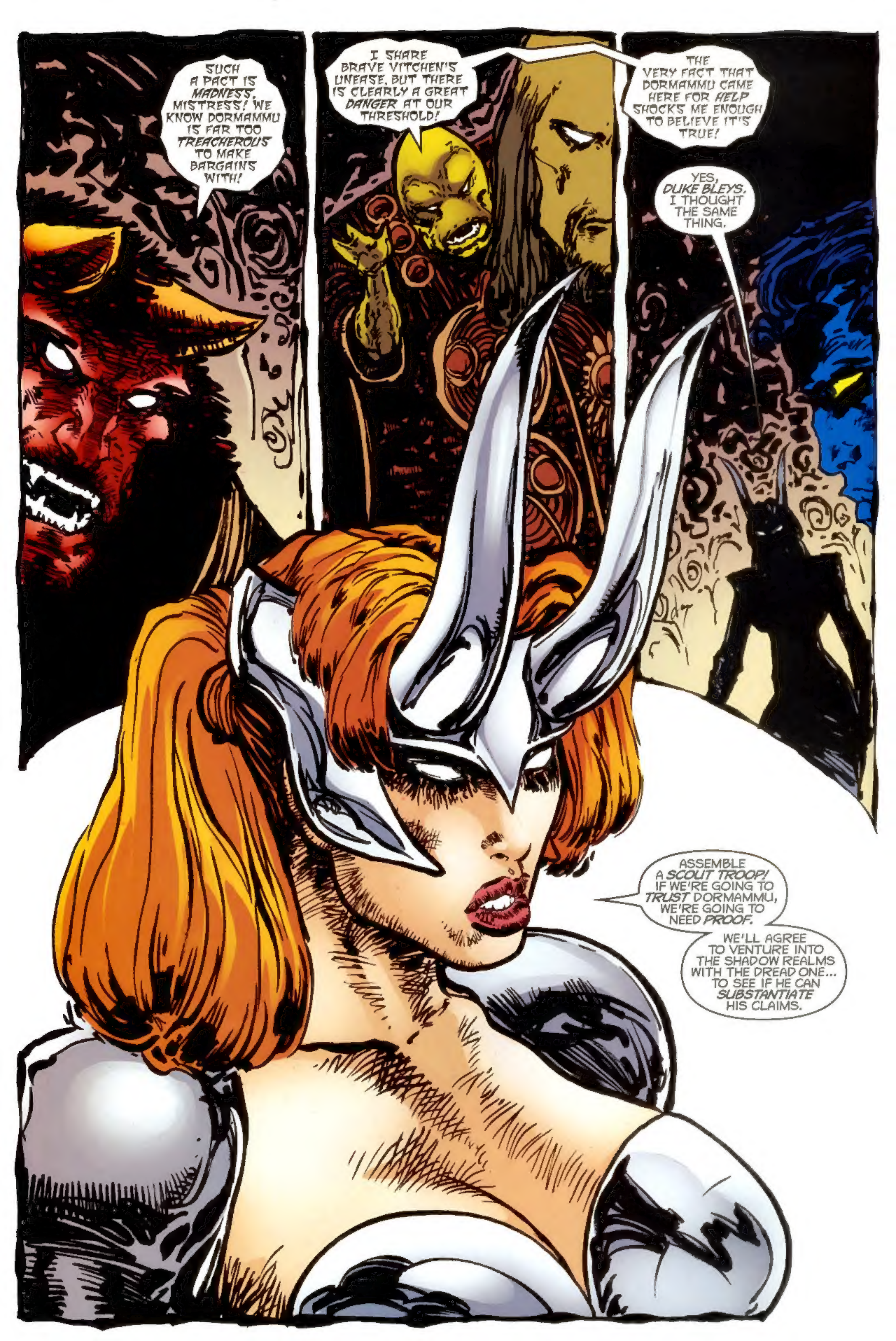
A COOPERATIVE
PACT? WITH THE DREAD
DORMAMMU?

I'LL NEED TIME
TO CONSIDER THIS
UNUSUAL PROPOSAL. IN
THE MEANTIME, MY PEOPLE
WILL ESCORT YOU TO
AN AUDIENCE HALL,
DREAD ONE.

LATER...

WELL,
MY FRIENDS?
VALUED ADVISORS
ALL, YOU MAY
SPEAK OPENLY.
WHAT THINK
YOU?

VITCHEN?
HAVE YOU NO
COMMENTS?



SUCH
A PACT IS
MADNESS.
MISTRESS! WE
KNOW DORMAMMU
IS FAR TOO
TREACHEROUS
TO MAKE
BARGAINS
WITH!

I SHARE
BRAVE VITCHEN'S
UNEASE, BUT THERE
IS CLEARLY A GREAT
DANGER AT OUR
THRESHOLD!

THE
VERY FACT THAT
DORMAMMU CAME
HERE FOR *HELP*
SHOCKS ME ENOUGH
TO BELIEVE IT'S
TRUE!

YES,
DUKE BLEYS.
I THOUGHT
THE SAME
THING.

ASSEMBLE
A SCOUT TROOP!
IF WE'RE GOING TO
TRUST DORMAMMU,
WE'RE GOING TO
NEED PROOF.

WE'LL AGREE
TO VENTURE INTO
THE SHADOW REALMS
WITH THE DREAD ONE...
TO SEE IF HE CAN
SUBSTANTIATE
HIS CLAIMS.

BUT
MISTRESS--!

DO AS
I SAY! THIS IS
MY DUTY, MY
PURPOSE, THE
VERY PURPOSE OF
LIMBO ITSELF...
TO ACT AS A
BUFFER AGAINST
THE OUTER
DARK!

DO AS
I HAVE
BIDDEN
YOU!

YES,
MISTRESS.

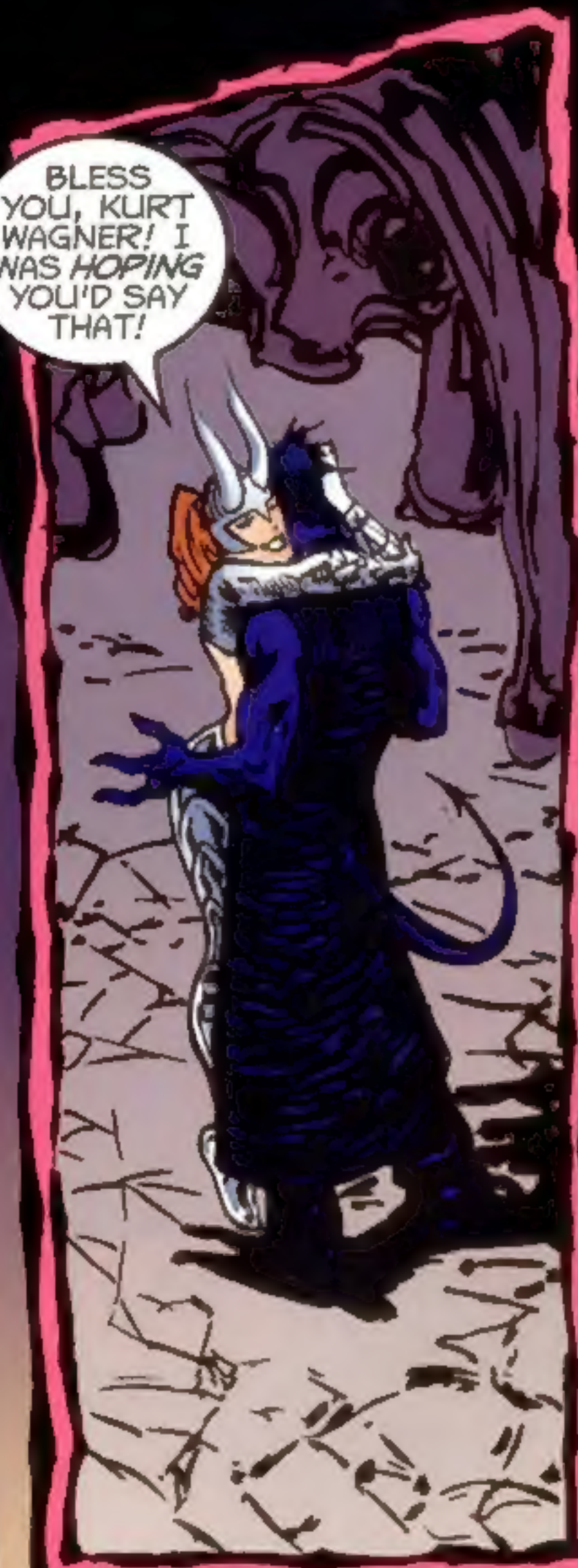
YOU'VE
SAID NOTHING,
KURT.

HAVEN'T I?
THEN FOR WHAT
IT'S WORTH, IF YOU
PLAY WITH A GUY
WHOSE HEAD'S
ON FIRE, YOU'RE
GOING TO GET
BURNED.

BLESS
YOU, KURT
WAGNER! I
WAS HOPING
YOU'D SAY
THAT!

Hah!
THANK YOU
FOR THAT! I'M
ONLY SORRY
THAT IT'S
TIME FOR YOU
TO RETURN TO
THE MORTAL
PLANE....

OH NO,
AMANDA. I'M
NOT GOING
ANYWHERE YET.
I NEED TO STAY
AROUND AND
WATCH YOUR
BACK.



I AM PLEASED SHE APPRECIATES MY SUPPORT. AMANDA SEFTON--MAGIK AS SHE IS NOW CALLED--IS VERY DEAR TO ME, AND SHE'S NEW TO THIS OTHERWORLDLY JOB.

HOW I WOULD HAVE LAUGHED YEARS AGO IF YOU'D TOLD ME AMANDA WOULD BECOME THE CHOSEN GUARDIAN OF THE SUPERNATURAL PLANES...

...BUT, I CARE FOR HER. AND WE X-MEN LOOK AFTER OUR OWN.

WE RIDE OUT FROM THE GATES OF LIMBO AT WHAT PASSES FOR DAWN IN THIS UNHOLY PLACE...

I MUST SAY, MISTRESS MAGIK, I APPRECIATE THIS SPIRIT OF COOPERATION.

VERY LITTLE IN THE WAY OF COOPERATION EXISTS BETWEEN US YET, DREAD ONE.

WE'LL SEE... IF MY AUGURIES ARE CORRECT, THE NEXT SPLINTER REALM UNDER THREAT IS THE ONE WE NOW APPROACH...



"...MUSPELHEIM, THE
REALM OF SURTUR!"

nothing...
nothing...

...NOTHING
REMAINS! THE LAND
OF FIRE, REDUCED
TO A BURNT-OUT
CINDER!

IT DEFIES
BELIEF!

SEE THERE?
THE BLACKENED
HUSKS OF BONES? EVEN
SURTUR'S DEMON
GUARD HAVE BEEN
ANNIHILATED.

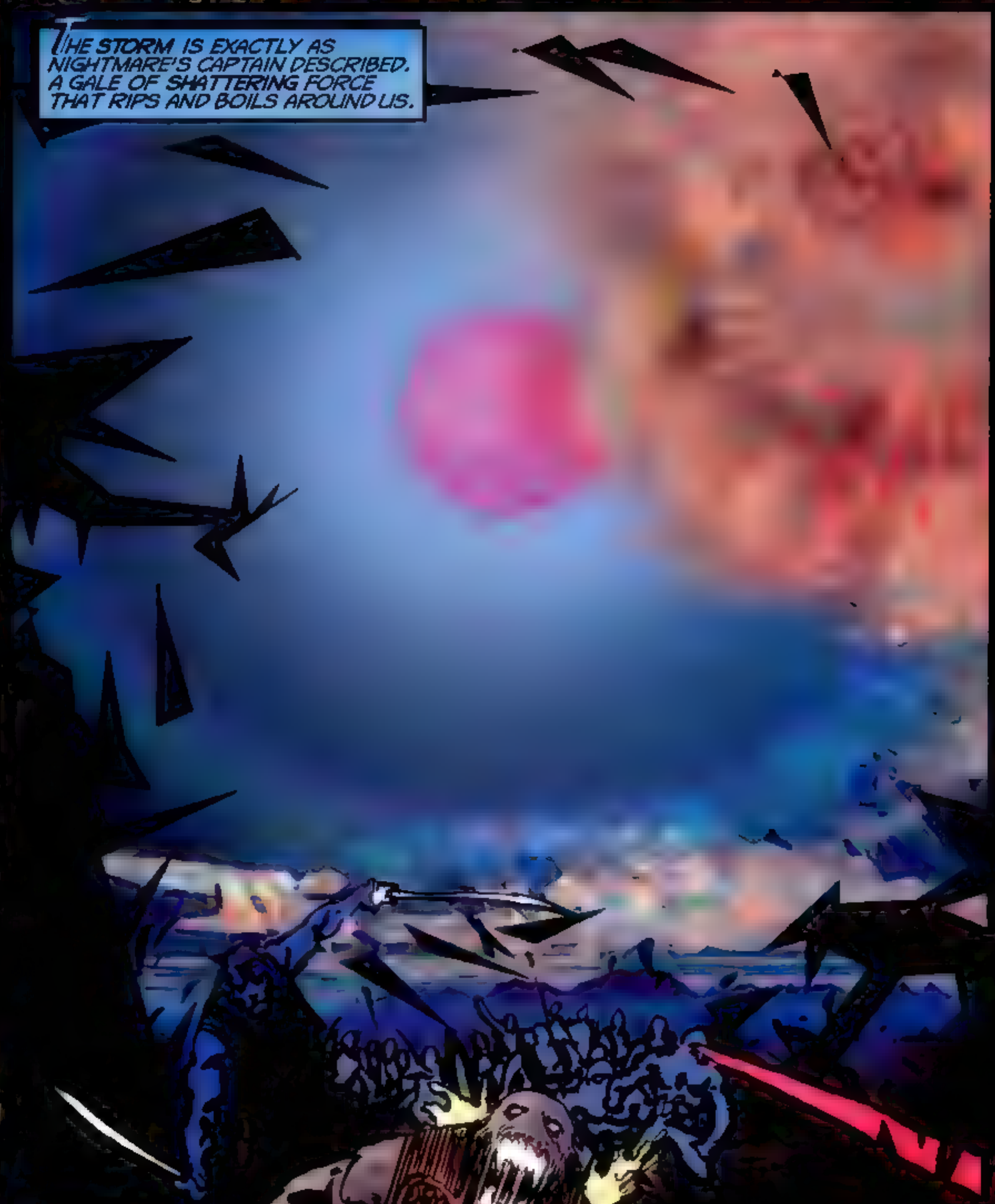
BUT
SURTUR? HE'S
LIKE A NORSE
DEITY! WHAT
FORCE COULD
HAVE DONE
THIS?



AND THERE...
SURTUR'S BLADE...
ITS ETERNAL FLAME
EXTINGUISHED!

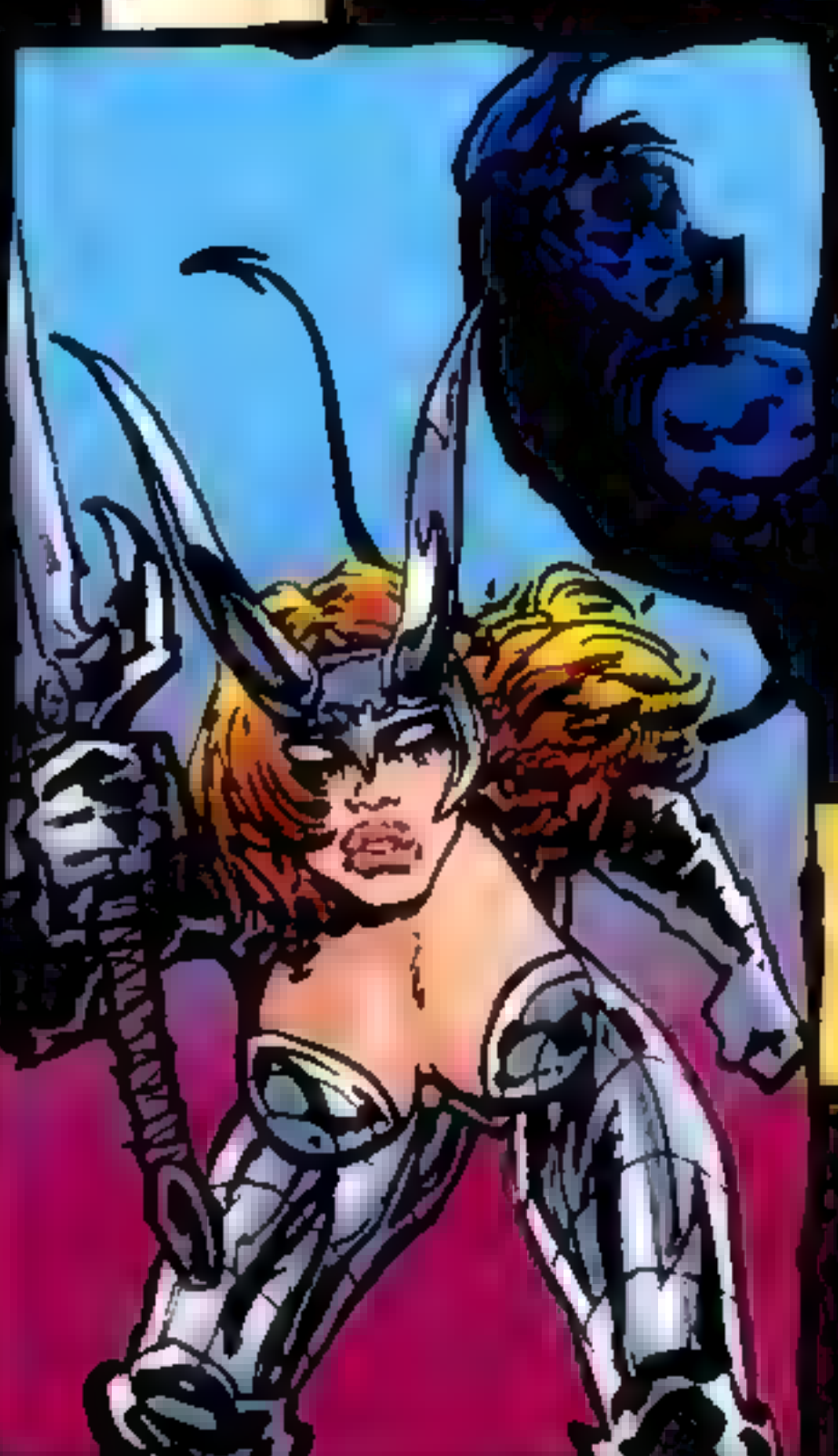
AMA--
MAGIK?
THERE
IS A CHILL
IN THE AIR,
AS IF...

LOOK!
LOOK! A
TEMPEST
BREAKS THE
SKY!



THE STORM IS EXACTLY AS
NIGHTMARE'S CAPTAIN DESCRIBED.
A GALE OF SHATTERING FORCE
THAT RIPS AND BOILS AROUND US.

SHARP BLADES OF WHAT
SEEMS LIKE LIVING DARKNESS
DISENGAGE FROM THE CLOUDS
AND CUT THE AIR AS THEY SPIN.



THEN THEY CUT FLESH...
AND LIMBO'S WARRIORS
SCREAM.

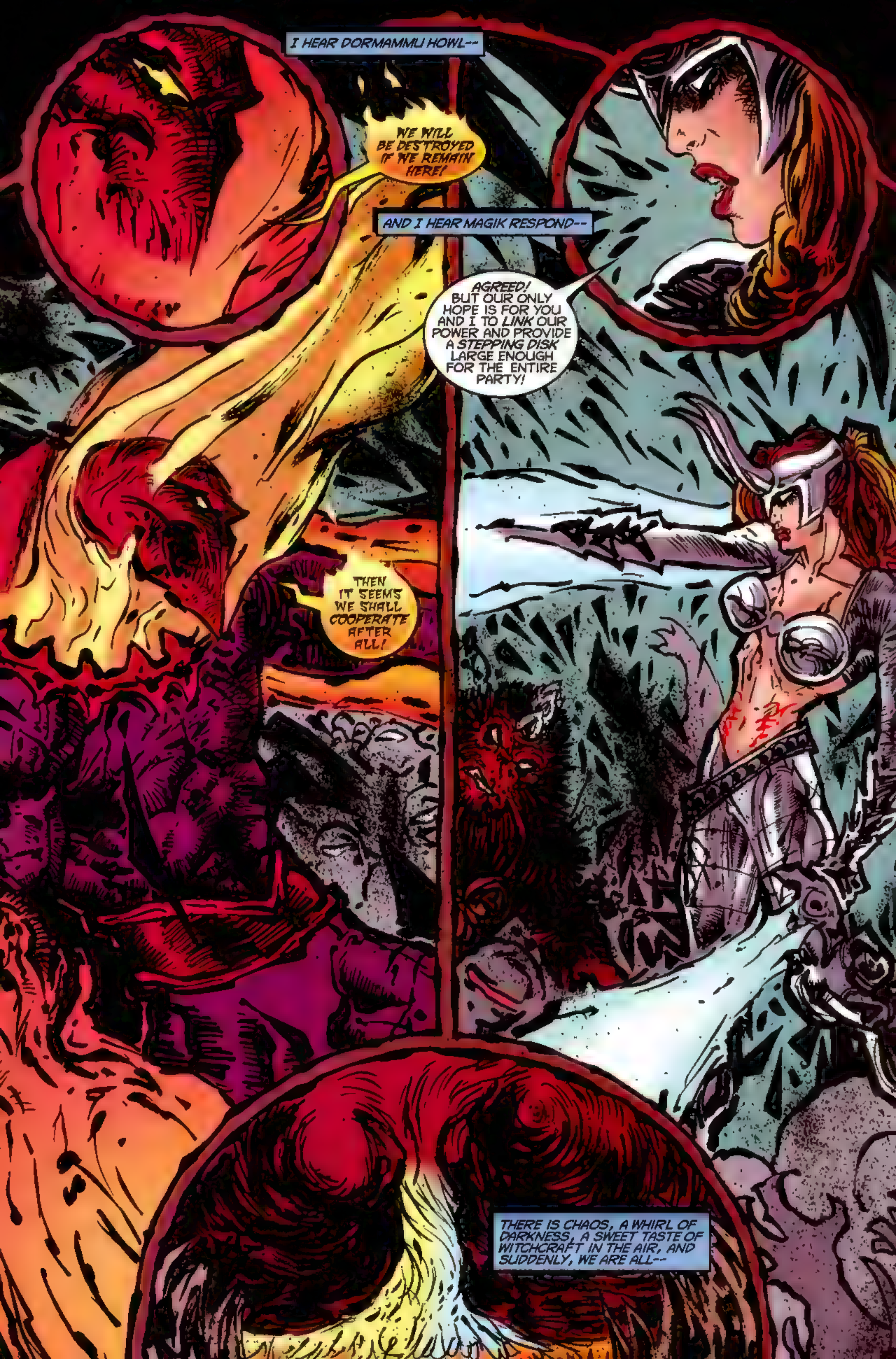


WE FIGHT BACK AGAINST A FOE
WE BARELY UNDERSTAND AND
CANNOT MATCH.



ITCHEN AND I HOLD THE LEFT
FLANK, ALONG WITH SOME OF
DORMAMMLI'S MINDLESS ONE
SERVITORS.

THEY MAKE NO SOUND AS THEY
DIE, BUT THEY DIE JUST THE
SAME, CUT APART BY RAZOR
SLIVERS OF NIGHT.



I HEAR DORMAMMU HOWL---

WE WILL
BE DESTROYED
IF WE REMAIN
HERE!

AND I HEAR MAGIK RESPOND---

AGREED!
BUT OUR ONLY
HOPE IS FOR YOU
AND I TO LINK OUR
POWER AND PROVIDE
A STEPPING DISK
LARGE ENOUGH
FOR THE ENTIRE
PARTY!

THEN
IT SEEMS
WE SHALL
COOPERATE
AFTER
ALL!

THERE IS CHAOS, A WHIRL OF
DARKNESS, A SWEET TASTE OF
WITCHCRAFT IN THE AIR, AND
SUDDENLY, WE ARE ALL---

--ELSEWHERE!

THE STEPPING DISK TAKES US
BACK INTO THE MARTIAL YARD
OF THE LIMBO FORTRESS.

BUT THE STRAIN OF
SUCH CONJURATION
HAS BEEN IMMENSE...

MISTRESS!
MISTRESS!

I...WILL BE
FINE...BLEYS...
GIVE ME A
MOMENT...

...I MUST
SPEAK WITH
NUGENT.

CLOSE, EH,
MORTAL?

TOO CLOSE,
VITCHEN...

"EVEN
DORMAMMLI
FEELS IT."

THE
WORK IS
GOING FINE,
MAGIK...



...MY MACHINE
IS ALREADY STOCKED
WITH *THREE-QUARTERS*
OF THE WORLD'S
ARCANE DATA.

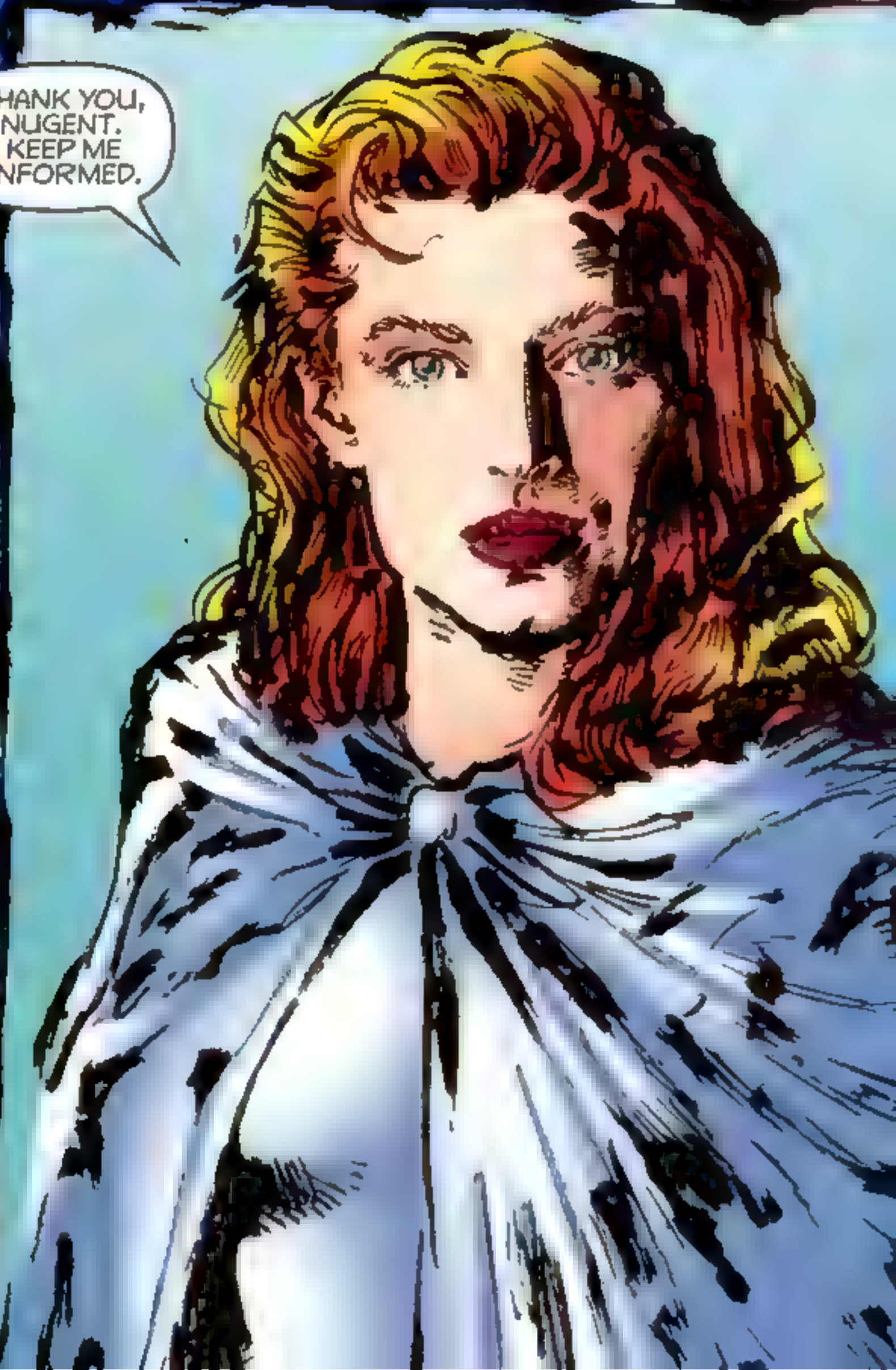
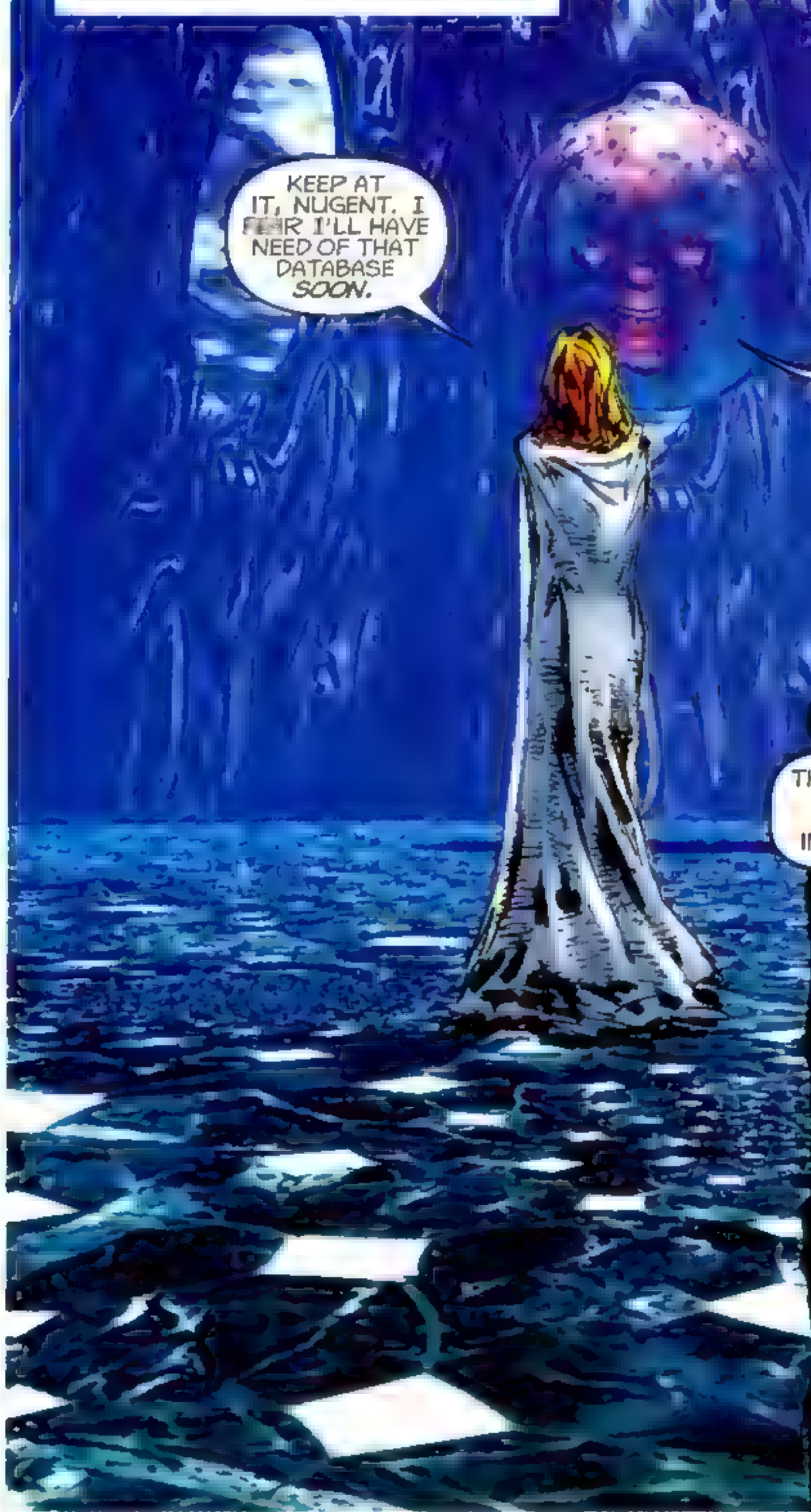


KEEP AT
IT, NUGENT. I
FEAR I'LL HAVE
NEED OF THAT
DATABASE
SOON.

I'VE
TABULATED THE
INFORMATION YOU
PROVIDED, AND HAVING
ANALYZED THE PATTERNS,
THE MACHINE SUGGESTS
THE NEXT TARGET
WILL BE *HADES*
ITSELF.

H-Hades?

THANK YOU,
NUGENT.
KEEP ME
INFORMED.





VITCHEN...
WE MUST PREPARE
AN EXPEDITION TO
HADES...TO WARN
MEPHISTO.

I
AM WEARY,
GOODNIGHT,
BOYS.

Hmm!
AS YOU WISH,
MISTRESS.

SO,
MORTAL...
YOU ARE NO
STRANGER
TO THIS
PLACE?

NO.
THE X-MEN
HAVE BATTLED
BELASCO HERE
MORE THAN
ONCE BEFORE.*

BELASCO,
EH? NOW THERE
WAS A TYRANT! AND
AFTER HIM, SYM, WHO
ATTEMPTED TO RULE
LIMBO THROUGH A
TECHNOLOGICAL
VIRUS. IT'S NEVER
LESS THAN
WAR HERE.

TELL ME...
YOUR APPEARANCE
SEEMS TO ME AT ODDS
WITH THE PRIESTLY GARB
YOU WORE WHEN YOU
ARRIVED.

FRIEND,
I GET THAT A
LOT. BUT HERE...
IN LIMBO... IT'S
GETTING HARD TO
RATIONALIZE
IT.

*IN THE CLASSIC UNCANNY
X-MEN #160 AND MOST
RECENTLY IN THE X-MEN:
BLACK SUN LIMITED
SERIES! --MIKE

HADES...

MY MASTER...A BATTLE HAS BEGUN AT THE MAIN GATES. INTRUDERS ARE TRYING TO BREAK IN.



I'M SORRY. I THOUGHT YOU SAID INTRUDERS WERE TRYING TO BREAK IN.

THAT CAN'T BE RIGHT...NO ONE COMES TO HADES WITHOUT MY PERMISSION.

This inset panel features a close-up of Hades' face, characterized by his pale skin, dark hair, and a red cape. He has a stern, slightly menacing expression. Two speech bubbles are positioned above him, containing the dialogue from the main panel.



DOUBLE
THE GUARD
AND--eh?

MEPHISTO,
LORD OF LIES! I COME
HERE TO TALK, NOT TO
BATTLE YOUR GATE
GUARDS!

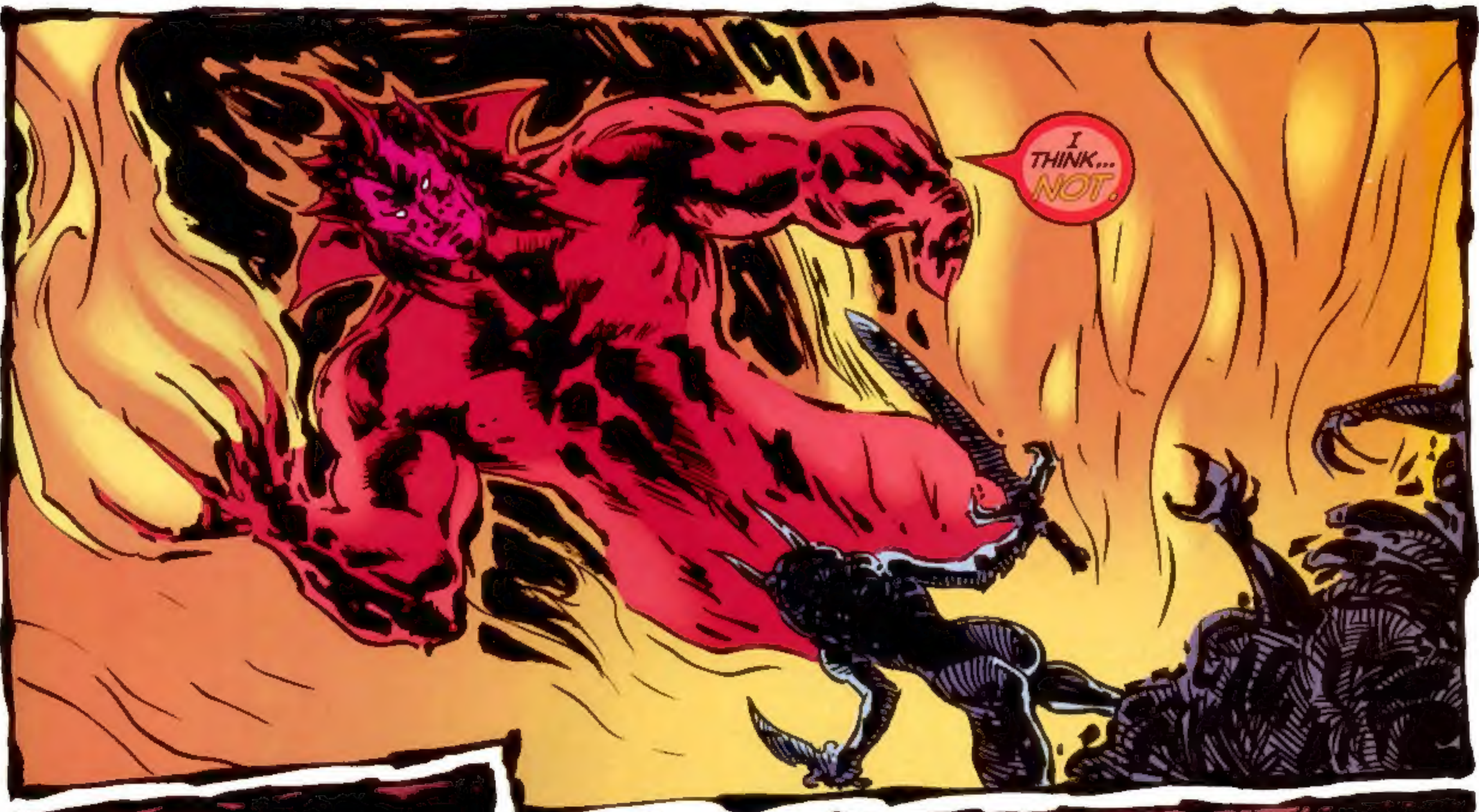


DESTROY
HER! DESTROY
HER FOR HER
INSOLENCE!

INSOLENCE?
INSOLENCE?!

I CAME
HERE TO WARN
YOU, AND
YOU CALL ME
INSOLENT?

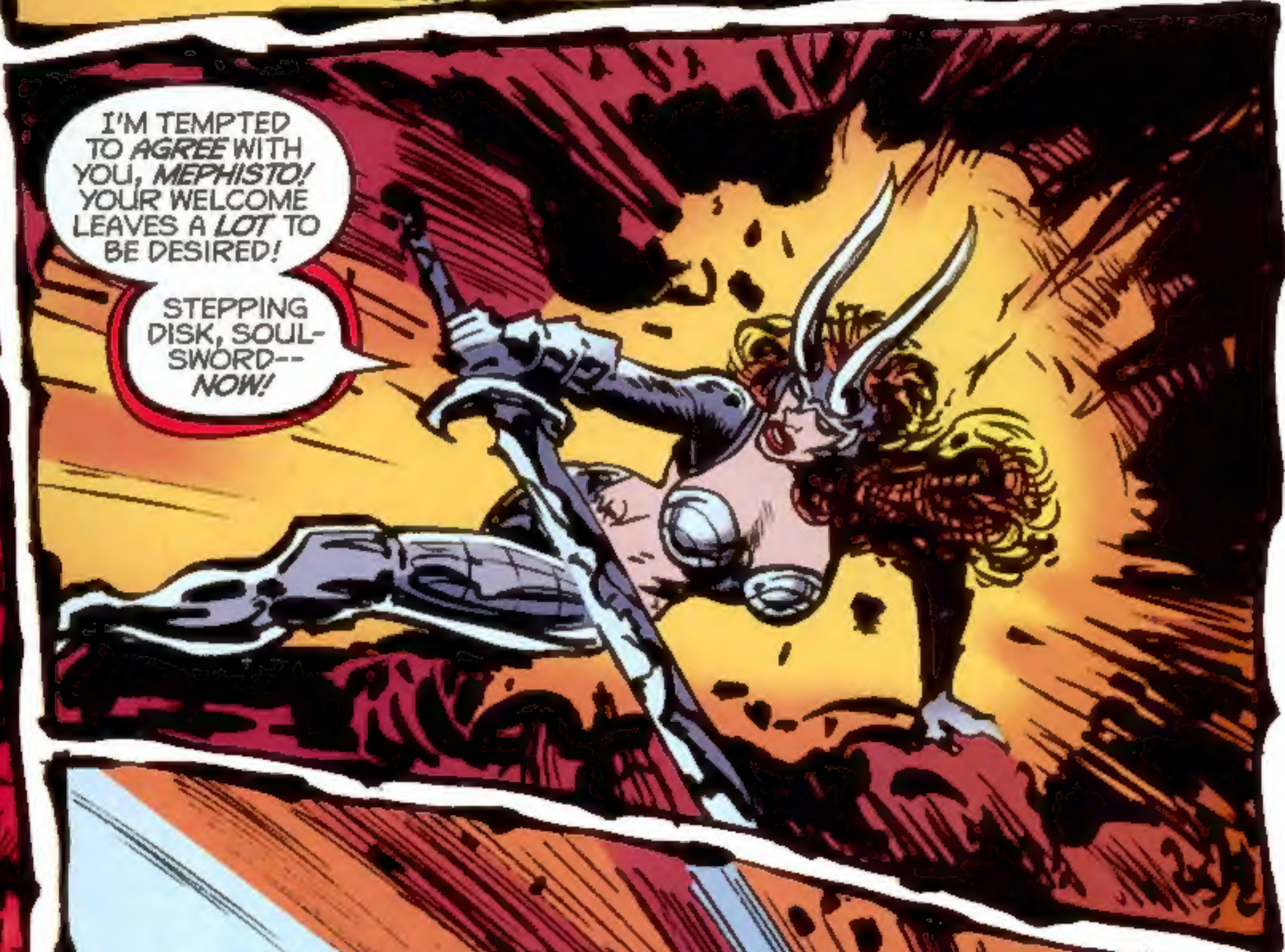
CALL
YOUR
BEASTS
OFF,
MEPHISTO!
NOW!



I THINK...
NOT.



I *KNOW*
YOU, MISTRESS
OF LIMBO. YOU
SHOULD HAVE
NEVER COME
HERE!



I'M TEMPTED
TO AGREE WITH
YOU, MEPHISTO!
YOUR WELCOME
LEAVES A LOT TO
BE DESIRED!

STEPPING
DISK, SOUL-
SWORD---
NOW!





LET US
START OVER,
MEPHISTO...

eh?



I WANT
YOU TO *LISTEN*
TO ME...BUT IF YOU
REFUSE, I'LL HAVE NO
COMPUNCTION ABOUT
GIVING YOU A *WOUND*
YOU'LL REMEMBER
FOR A LONG
TIME!



CURSE
YOU! LISTEN
TO WHAT?

JUST
LISTEN.



WHAT...
WHAT IS THAT
SOUND, THAT
THUNDERING
OUTSIDE?



"*THAT*, MY LORD OF
HADES, IS WHAT I WAS
TRYING TO TELL YOU!

"A FORCE OF DESTRUCTION HAS
BEEN LOOSED UPON THE SPLINTER
REALMS, AND *YOUR* PRECIOUS
KINGDOM IS ITS *NEXT* TARGET!"

N
E
X
T
THE
FALL
OF
HADES